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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADANA 000126

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [ADANA](#)

SUBJECT: LOCAL TV STATIONS APPLY TO BROADCAST IN KURDISH

REF: A. A) ANKARA 3236

[1](#)B. B) ADANA 00119

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: At least four local television stations - three in Diyarbakir and one in Batman - have applied to Turkey's Radio and Television Board (RTUK) for the right to broadcast Kurdish-language programs. RTUK has acknowledged the applications and claims it is reviewing them in consultation with other government entities. A Gun TV representative stated that if approved, the broadcasts would be two times per week for 45 minutes each. Concurrent to this review process, a September 1 RTUK press release announced that Gun TV would be shut down for one month some time in September due to a December 2003 broadcast that was "against the values of Ataturk, against the unity of the state, and against the nation's existence and independence." End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) At least four local television stations have applied to Turkey's Radio and Television Board (RTUK) for the right to broadcast Kurdish-language news and cultural programs. A reform package passed in 2002 initially paved the way for such applications, allowing for broadcasting in "languages and dialects traditionally used in daily life by Turkish citizens." Nearly two years after the reforms were passed, the state-run national TRT channel initiated programming in Kurdish and other minority languages (Ref A). Now local channels are waiting to see if they will be authorized to do the same.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Three of the local station applicants, Gun TV, ART, and Soz TV, are located in Diyarbakir. The fourth, Cagri TV, opened in Batman in 1994 and is that city's only local television station. Gun TV's General Manager told poloff on September 3 that his station had originally applied in March 2004 for permission to air Kurdish-language broadcasts, and when they did not receive any reply, they applied again. After the second application, RTUK told them it was "being considered." Cagri TV applied in June after Kurdish language broadcasts started on TRT. ART applied on August 23.

RTUK: Can we check your references?

[1](#)4. (SBU) Cagri staff said they had heard a "positive signal" from RTUK in August, but had not received anything in writing. They were optimistic. As of early September, however, the Gun TV representative had not received any communication from RTUK beyond acknowledgement that their applications were being reviewed. In fact staff at Cagri TV and Gun TV seemed to be learning more about the status of their applications through the press than through official channels. On August 20, for example, Milliyet reported that RTUK had solicited the views of MIT (Turkey's intelligence service) and the Interior Ministry about the applications. The Interior Ministry, via the relevant Governor's offices, reportedly confirmed that the language and dialects mentioned in the applications were spoken in their respective provinces. [Note: This confirmation likely fulfills a formality required by the official application process. End Note.] A Gun TV representative told poloff that if the station's application were approved, he believed it would be for two 45-minute Kurdish-language programs per week.

Mixed Messages

[1](#)5. (U) While the staff of Gun TV was encouraged that their application was being considered, they had just received notice a day before our September 3 meeting that they would soon be shut down for a month by RTUK for a live broadcast they aired previously. In a September 1 RTUK press release, the Board gave notice that Gun TV would be shut down for a month (dates unspecified) for a broadcast that was "against the values of Ataturk, against the unity of the state, and against the nation's existence."

[1](#)6. (SBU) The Gun General Director explained that the station had broadcast live coverage of a symposium on local administration, human rights and the media. Symposium organizers had received the appropriate permission for the event from the Governor, and local government officials as well as at least one telephone participant based in Europe debated the issues in a panel format. One of the participants gave a presentation in Kurdish with simultaneous translation into Turkish. According to our contact, others on the panel who

spoke in Turkish had more critical things to say about the government than did the Kurdish speaker, but he believes the combination of the language and the content led to the shutdown notice. They expect the one-month penalty to start some time in September. In response to this penalty, Gun's representative said, other media sources had announced Gun was being temporarily shut down for "broadcasting separatist material." "You would expect other journalists in Turkey to support us," he said, but the attitudes of some other media outlets made Gun staffers feel very "lonely."

17. (SBU) Comment: The Turkish authorities are dragging their feet on these applications. If any of the applications are approved, it will mark another step forward in implementation of Turkey's reform process. It took two years from the passage of reforms for Kurdish language broadcasts on TRT to begin, and an equal amount of time, if not more, for the approval process allowing Kurdish language instruction centers to open (Ref B). There is a certain irony to Gun TV's application being reviewed in one RTUK hand, while the other orders a one-month shutdown. End comment.

ALLISON